

## BRIEFS

### SUDAN OFFICIALS SET CRACKDOWN

JUBA, South Sudan (BP) — Sudan security officials have arrested two Christian leaders near Khartoum and are also seeking to re-imprison two pastors who were freed in August, Morning Star News has reported. Family and church officials were given no reason for the arrest of the leaders, who have objected to government demolition of churches. Sudan President Omar al-Bashir has vowed to adopt a stricter version of sharia Islamic law and recognize only Islamic culture and the Arabic language.

### WASH. COACH FIGHTS PRAYER PROHIBITION

BREMERTON, Wa. (BP) — World News Service reports a Bremerton, Wa., high school football coach suspended for praying on the field after games has filed a discrimination complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Joe Kennedy, assistant varsity and head junior varsity coach at Bremerton High School, claims the school district violated his rights by prohibiting him from kneeling at the 50-yard line and praying silently after games. School officials in September told him he could pray, but his prayers should not be "outwardly discernible as religious activity."

### CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS RECEIVE EXEMPTION

NASHVILLE (BP) — At least 30 Christian schools have received exemption from federal Title IX provisions requiring equal treatment based not only on biological gender but also transgendered identity. At least half of the affected schools are Southern Baptist and governed by boards of trustees appointed by state Baptist conventions. Affected by Title IX are about 16,500 local school districts, 7,000 postsecondary institutions, and an unspecified number of charter and for-profit schools, libraries, museums, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and the education agencies of 50 states, D.C., and U.S. territories and possessions, according to the U.S. Dept. of Education.

## Kroger to offer transgender benefits

### Up to \$100K in coverage available to employees

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP and local reports) — A national supermarket chain with a major presence in Mississippi is set to offer its 400,000 workers up to \$100,000 for surgery, drug therapy, and other gender-reassignment procedures.

The Kroger Company, based in Cincinnati, Oh., and the largest supermarket chain in the U.S. with 2,774 locations, will also become the largest American retailer to offer such coverage beginning Jan. 1. The 2014 Kroger Fact Book lists 33 locations in Mississippi, employing 4,680 associates. The state with the most Kroger locations is California, with 335 locations.

The announcement earlier this fall thrilled activists and news media outlets. The Daily Beast web site called the move a "milestone for private employers in the United States," and a "tipping point, of sorts," because it boosted Kroger's score on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, a public relations tool designed to pressure businesses into adopting pro-homosexual policies.



KROGER ON LAKE HARBOR DRIVE, RIDGELAND

With Kroger's decision on gender reassignment benefits, nine out of the 10 largest American private employers will score an "A" on the index.

In 2002, no major U.S. corporation covered transgender procedures, such as gender-reassignment surgery and drug therapy, under its employee medical benefit plan. Today more than 400 companies do so, including Ford Motor Com-

pany, Apple, Coca-Cola, Netflix, and Facebook.

Only four of the 10 largest American companies — Walmart, McDonald's, The Home Depot, and UPS — do not offer "trans-inclusive" benefits, according to The Daily Beast. The website noted that "all four would have a 100% rating if they made this single change."

Despite accolades from the pro-transgender community,

Kroger is not setting a trend, noted Peter Sprigg, senior research fellow for policy studies at the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C. Political correctness has long dominated higher education, the news media, and the entertainment industry, he pointed out.

"Unfortunately, I think we can now add most of corporate

see KROGER on p. 11

## South Carolina Baptists pledge \$1M to support missionaries

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP) — The South Carolina Baptist Convention (SCBC) has pledged to send a one million dollar, year-end gift to the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention at a time when the missionary-sending entity is implementing a reduction in its worldwide force due to budget shortfalls.

IMB announced earlier this year that it would need to reduce its total number of missionaries and staff by 600-800 due to expenditures that exceeded revenues by \$210 million over the past six years.

Even though SCBC did not meet its budget in 2013 and 2014, the convention's executive board

reached into the state's fund balance — after agreeing to send \$450,000 from the budget — to provide the one million dollar gift to IMB.

Speaking to the executive board during its year-end meeting Dec. 10 at the state convention building in Columbia, Marshall Blalock, chairman of the board's Budget, Finance & Audit Committee, said, "We won't meet our convention budget this year, but projections show that we will be closer than we have been to our budget goal — close enough to send \$450,000 from the budget rather than from the fund balance."

"As our committee looked at that gift, we unanimously decided to take an additional \$550,000

from the fund balance and make a one million dollar, year-end gift to the International Mission Board," said Blalock, pastor of First Church in Charleston.

IMB President David Platt responded, "My heart was overwhelmed with gratitude and joy when I heard that South Carolina Baptists voted to approve a one million dollar gift to the International Mission Board. This extremely generous gift will go a long way in helping the IMB get to a healthy financial place in the present so that we can move forward into a future marked by more missionaries sent, more disciples made, and more churches planted among unreached peoples than ever before."

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Remember the martyrs

It is fitting that as we close out another year of Great Commission service around the world, we take time to remember the missionary martyrs.

Life for many Southern Baptist missionaries and their families is not easy. That's not to say there is no joy for them, because there is indeed great joy in the service of the Lord. They have been called by God and have surrendered to His leading of their own free will, and there is no greater thrill than helping to lead people to salvation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Still, it can be a difficult assignment. There is the worry of being separated by great distances from loved ones who need them, such as elderly parents. There are the manifestly foreign cultures they encounter, from violent religious extremists to passive pantheists.

They seldom complain about the conditions under which they serve, whether it be a lack of electricity and potable water or the real possibility of being brought home due to funding shortfalls. They just go about their God-ordained mission of winning souls.

Some of them have paid the ultimate earthly price for obeying God's call on their lives. While records indicate only 25 Southern Baptist missionaries on the field have met a violent end in the 170-year history of the International Mission Board and its predecessor, the Foreign Mission Board, that's 25 too many of God's specially-chosen people.

During this season of international missions emphasis across the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, may we make this annual pause, for just a few moments, to remember those servants who were faithful unto death:

■ March 15, 2004 — Larry Elliott, his wife Jean, Karen Watson, and David McDonnell. Murdered in northern Iraq in a drive-by ambush of their automobile. McDonnell's wife Carrie was critically wounded but survived.

■ March 4, 2003 — Bill Hyde, working in Philippines. Killed by a terrorist bomb planted at Davao City Airport.

■ December 30, 2002 — Bill Koehn, Martha Myers, and Kathy Gariety, working at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Jibla, Yemen. Murdered at the hospital by a Muslim extremist.

■ April 21, 1998 — Charles W. Hood Jr., working in Colombia, South America. Shot to death in his front yard by robbers.

■ March 23, 1995 — Chu Hon and Kei Yi, working in Khabarovsk, Russia. Murdered in their locked apartment.

■ March 27, 1991 — Lynda Betha, working in Kenya. Beaten to death by highway robbers near Kijabe. Her husband Larry was also brutally beaten but survived.

■ October 2, 1990 — Mary Anna Gilbert, working in China. Killed in crash of hijacked Chinese jetliner near Guangzhou. She was a teacher with Cooperative Services International.

■ November 26, 1986 — Libby Senter, working in Liberia. Murdered along with her daughter Rachel.

■ October 11, 1985 — James Philpot, working in Mexico. Shot dead during a confrontation after a minor automobile accident.

■ June 15, 1978 — Archie G. Dunaway Jr., working in Rhodesia. Killed by guerrillas seeking an African-majority government in the white-ruled, former British colony.

■ March 21, 1970 — Gladys Hopewell, working in Taiwan. No details of her murder were available.

■ January 16, 1972 — Mavis Pate, working in the Gaza area of the Middle East. Shot by Arab guerrillas in an ambush as she drove near a refugee camp.

■ July 7, 1971 — Paul E. and Nancy Potter, working in the Dominican Republic. No details of their murders were available.

■ February 10, 1951 — William L. Wallace, working in China. Died in a communist prison. Many people familiar with Wallace's case believe the physician was tortured to death.

■ January 1942 — Rufus F. Gray, working in China. Died in Japanese camp for war prisoners in Baguio, Philippines.

■ December 1880 — John Westrup, working in Mexico. Murdered by a band of Indians and Mexicans while traveling from Santa Rosa to Monterey.

■ October 1, 1861 — J. Landrum Holmes, working in China. Murdered while attempting to dissuade invaders from attacking the village of Chu Kia on Shantung Peninsula during the Taiping Rebellion.

Since the first generation of Christians, there has been a constant element of danger in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and there's still a need for people willing to answer the Great Commission in hostile areas of the world. All they're asking of us is to support them sacrificially through prayer, giving, and going.

Given the task at hand (Matt. 28:18-20), that's not too much to ask.

## Reflecting on 2015

Serving as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention has been one of the greatest privileges and responsibilities in my life. I have now served for 18 months in this role. In my final article in 2015 to our Southern Baptist family, I want to share five reflections.

■ One of our unique strengths is that we are a cross-generational convention of churches. I was so encouraged to see an increase in the number of younger pastors and leaders at our annual meeting last June in Columbus, Oh. I am convinced the more we focus on reaching our nation and world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the more we will continue to be a cross-generational convention. The more cross-generational our churches are, the stronger our churches will be internally and externally.

■ We are a multi-ethnic convention. Over 10,300 of our [more than 50,000] churches are non-white churches. In fact, 58% of the nearly 1,000 new churches we planted together last year in North America were non-white. The Southern Baptist Convention is becoming more and more diverse.

In 2014, Timothy George, the founding dean of the Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, AL, released a powerful article entitled, *Troubled Waters*. In this article, he gave the following observation about our convention: Southern Baptists have become one of the most ethnically diverse and multilingual denominations in the country.

In my travels across our nation, I have found these very words to be true. This must continue to occur with an even greater acceleration for us to reach our own nation for Christ. The real key to becoming more multi-ethnic is that it occurs in our churches exponentially.

■ As the largest Protestant denomination in our nation, I believe our decisions and actions are influential. The decisions we make can impact other denominations and the greater evangelical world in a positive or a negative manner. This is why we must remain committed to Scripture as our final authority so we can point others to the Lord continually.

I believe there is another angle of influence that is far-reaching and long-lasting. There are many secular leaders who attend our Southern Baptist churches: CEOs, university presidents, elected and government leaders, teachers and school administrators, military leaders, and first responders. Millions of hard-working Southern Baptists desire to live out their faith in Christ. This is why all we teach and do in our churches is significant.



Guest opinion  
with Ronnie Floyd

■ We are a convention with many needs. We are not a perfect convention. We are all sinners saved by the grace of God alone. Thankfully, God is actively conforming us to the likeness of Christ. We have so many spiritual needs. Many of our churches are spiritually unhealthy. This is due to being led by and comprised of people who, like each of us, will sometimes make choices that are not the will of God. At times, this results in things being said or written that are not godly and honoring to Christ and others.

Yet we are family. The challenge of navigating and leading is extremely difficult when our own culture within our Southern Baptist family becomes unhealthy. Often, this limits our impact in evangelizing, baptizing, discipling, even financing and sending others to be on mission with God. Therefore, we must always see ourselves in need of the strong hand of God upon us.

■ We are a convention that responds to needs. Each time a crisis occurs in our nation and world, it is with confidence that I can say, "We are there as Southern Baptists." Whether it is through our global response teams, our disaster relief teams, financial support, or prayer, we are there.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ being made known to all is the last great hope for this world. In these uncertain days in America and across our dangerous world, we must forward the impacting message of Jesus Christ. This is why I believe our Southern Baptist churches will rise to give the largest offering in our history to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

More than ever before, there is a need for us to rise up and respond to the overwhelming needs in America and the world. If we are true to our history, we will.

Floyd is president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of multi-campus Cross Church in northwest Arkansas. This article first appeared at [ronniefloyd.com](http://ronniefloyd.com), and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and clarity.

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# Advice for those struggling with their call

**RICHMOND, Va. (BP)** — The first phase in the International Mission Board (IMB) "organizational reset" was completed in December and has led hundreds of missionaries to confront a question that, at some point, many in Christian service face: "How do I know if God is moving me to a new place of ministry?"

IMB has not released the results of Phase One, a voluntary retirement incentive (VRI) offered to all staff and field personnel 50 and older with at least five years of service, because IMB officials say employees have been asked to focus on God's will rather than on numbers.

"At every step, we have sought to guard the integrity of the process so as not to sway any IMB personnel as they make their decisions," IMB spokesperson Julie McGowan told BP in written comments. "Instead of personnel looking at each other wondering, 'How many more of us need or don't need to make a transition?' we want personnel looking to the Lord and asking, 'Are You leading me to make a transition?'"

Results of the entire voluntary resignation program, designed to bring the IMB's expenses in line with its income, will be announced in early 2016 following Phase Two, which will prompt all remaining IMB personnel to ask whether God is moving them to new fields of service, McGowan said.

The number of missionaries and stateside staff to accept the VRI was finalized Dec. 11. The IMB projects the two phases of its reset will yield a total reduction of at least 600 individuals.

## Discerning God's will

Consistent with the focus on God's will, Baptist Press (BP) asked several ministry veterans, including two missionaries who accepted the VRI, how they have discerned the Lord's leading in ministry moves. Missionaries Stewart and Lissa Roberson, who served more than a decade overseas in the Asia region, told BP God led them to accept the retirement incentive in a way that shattered their paradigm.

"We were just getting to the point where we had reached our language requirement," Lissa Roberson said. "We felt like we were gaining traction in the community with some relationships we had built. We felt like things were just beginning for us. Then suddenly we were feeling this pressure [from God] to leave. We just could not understand that."

The Robersons' process of discerning God's will involved Scripture reading and prayer, requesting prayer advice from "committed prayer warriors," and thinking through the practical implications of their decision.

They said though God typically has given them an inner sense



### ▲ LEADING THE WAY —

Steven Kunkel (left) and other worship team members lead children and youth in a praise chorus at a Japanese-Paraguayan house church in Asunción, Paraguay. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)

### ► STUDENTS GATHER —

Missionary Martha Moore talks with students at a Connexion event in her apartment in Braunschweig, Germany. Martha started Connexion, a campus evangelism ministry, in 2000 on one East German campus. (BP photo)



of peace before they make a major decision, this time the peace didn't come until after they accepted the retirement incentive. They did not sense taking it was wise from a human standpoint, they said, but felt a strong leading they believed was from the Holy Spirit.

The Robersons are in the process of moving from Japan to the Nashville area, where a local congregation has arranged housing and transportation. They are still seeking a ministry opportunity.

"When it came down to it, we knew we needed to take this," Stewart Roberson said, "and we couldn't really tell why at that point. We just believe the Holy Spirit was really influencing that decision."

## Leaving something good

Robby Gallaty, pastor of Long Hollow Church in Hendersonville, Tenn., said it is not unusual for God to lead His people away from thriving ministries. That's exactly what happened to him in October, when he moved to Long Hollow Church from Brainerd Church in Chattanooga.

"You don't always have to leave a church when things are bad," Gallaty told BP, citing advice from a mentor. "God could actually be calling you away at

the peak season of ministry in preparation for the guy who's coming behind you. Why do you always have to leave a church when it's bad?"

Gallaty said at Brainerd Church, "over the course of seven years, our disciple-making ministry grew from about 12-15 in discipling relationships to over 1,200 in discipling relationships," out of 2,100 worship attendees. Though Gallaty was not seeking to leave, he said God confirmed to him, "You have finished the task of creating a disciple-making DNA."

To leave one ministry and begin another, a Christian should have both a sense of release from the old ministry and a desire for the new one, Gallaty said. "If you don't have those two elements... then it's probably best you stay."

## Work was not done

For Fred Luter, God has never given a sense of release. Luter still serves as pastor of the first church to call him, Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans. Nearly 30 years ago, the congregation voted on him as pastor when it had 45 members. Today thousands attend worship each Sunday.

Christians in ministry "need to approach every position as

though this is the place they're going to stay forever," Luter, a former Southern Baptist Convention president, told BP. "...Don't despise small beginnings. You bloom where you're planted unless God tells you for sure, 'This is another place I want you to go.'"

"I tell young guys all the time, it's unfair to go to a church that has called you as pastor with a resume in your back pocket for the next church that comes along."

If it is God's will for a minister to move to a new field, Luter said, He will provide "an inner peace" through wise counsel, full support from the minister's wife if he is married, and a vibrant, personal relationship with Jesus, Luter said.

Though Luter has been invited to leave Franklin Avenue Church on multiple occasions, he noted, "Each time I just felt my work was not done."

## Practical questions

Sylvan Knobloch, director of church leadership development at the Illinois Baptist State Association, advises ministers considering transitions to answer a series of questions:

■ Why am I considering this transition at this time?

■ Does my current ministry setting allow me to be a good

steward of my spiritual gifts, passion for ministry, abilities, personality, and experiences?

■ Does my current ministry setting allow my spouse and me the opportunity to develop sustainable relationships? Are we able to develop comrades within the church and confidants outside the church?

■ Do my current ministry setting's organizational values and mission match my personal values and mission?

■ What are the lessons I have learned in my current ministry setting that will allow me to be more discerning when considering future ministry opportunities?

"Change is a part of life. Our ministry settings change and the minister's gifts, family, and calling evolve," Knobloch told BP in written comments. "Therefore, it is necessary for the minister to exercise discernment regarding their calling to a ministry. I suggest the pastor answer the above questions and pray, asking God for insight and direction."

"The second step in the discernment process is to set an appointment with a trusted friend to review the insights again. The counsel growing out of such a relationship will give the minister invaluable insight as he prayerfully considers his decision and calling," Knobloch said.

## Listen to God

Roger S. Oldham, vice president for convention communications and relations at the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, told BP he did not want to leave his longtime pastorate in Martin, Tenn., when he was called to the Executive Committee in 2007, but "the dread of being out of God's will outweighed my reluctance to follow His lead."

Oldham said he has often returned to seven principles of knowing and following God's will given to him by a mentor when he was in college:

■ Be sure your heart is in a neutral position, willing to go or stay or do whatever God guides you to do (Proverbs 3:5-6).

■ Pray specifically for guidance and wisdom (Philippians 4:6-7).

■ Meditate on the Word of God (Psalm 119:105).

■ Seek godly counsel from trusted mentors (Proverbs 11:14).

■ Trust the Lord for His inner conviction (Colossians 3:15).

■ Don't discount common sense (2 Timothy 1:7).

■ Maintain a good conscience before God and others (Acts 24:16).

As Christians in all walks of life seek to discern God's will, IMB missionary Stewart Roberson offered a final piece of advice: "Listen to where God is leading, and don't limit God in our thinking."

What would you do if you had just one more day to live? It's a thought-provoking process to consider how you would feel. What would you do? Would you sleep or even blink? Who would you call? Who would you want to see? What would you want to do? What would you want to say to your family? What loose ends have you left out there that, if possible, you would tie and get finished up?

Of course no one of us is going to be afforded the opportunity to live out our days and then hear the Lord say, "This time tomorrow, it's over," but when you look at it in reality, each of us could be living out our final day — you, me, folks around you. I got to thinking about one more day when I realized that 2016 is going to provide for us, if we live all the days of that year, with one more day. It is Leap Year, so the short month of the year — February — gets to boast about being filled with 29 rather than 28 days.

While we all will move along through this time process not knowing if today is our final day, one man in the Bible got an indication that his day was real soon. About as close as it gets to someone being told they've got another day to live may be in the book of Daniel, chapter five. Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, was a powerful man but he was also a pompous, sickening, arrogant, egotistical, self-centered guy. He threw a party for himself that lasted for days and invited all of the powerful people so they could come and adore him.

In the midst of all the celebration and praise heaped upon him, a strange thing happened. The part of a man's hand that writes, just a hand or fingers holding some type of instrument, began to write on the wall. You remember those words from the hand writing on the wall — Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin (Dan. 5:25). Shock came over the party and shook the soul of the powerful mob. No one knew the meaning of the words on the wall. Eventually Daniel, who walked with God and was a prophet of God, was brought into the arena and he would



## One More Day to Live

give the interpretation of the writing.

One part of the words on the wall meant, "Your days are numbered." The implication was that Belshazzar was running out of days and although he was not told it was his last day, in fact it was. The words on the wall said in total — judgment is coming to you. Belshazzar had left God out of his life and his kingdom and had spent his life thinking about himself. Now he was down to a short time and he gets a clear revelation from God that his life is about over.

The Scripture says of Belshazzar that after he got the word from Daniel and the message from God, he basically did nothing. In the next-to-last verse of the chapter, Daniel records this, "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain" (Dan. 5:30). As you and I stand on the front edge of a new time plane called 2016, we will live out these 366 days one at a time with some critical things we need to keep in mind.

First, there are certainties about each day that you and I need to recognize and relish. The certainty is that this day is a gift from God. It's not a gift from someone else. It's not a gift from physicians. It's not a gift from a friend. It's a gift from God. Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." All the other days you

have seen come and go are packaged away and will never be touched again, but this day is a treasure that is almost indescribable. God has given you and me a time frame that is filled with opportunities to express His love, live out His kindness, make decisions, and experience the wonder of His creation and the blessing of serving people around us and being enriched by their lives. Whether you and I have the full privilege of living out the whole package of 366 of these days, grab this one and live it as though it is the biggest and best gift you've ever been given.

Secondly, there are uncertainties. I suppose the longer you live, the more you become aware of the fact that you have no clue as to what this day holds. Oh, you've got plans, hopes, aspirations, things you intend to do and things that you don't plan to do, but with the rising of the sun each day everything can change. Incredibly and beyond description, everything can change. Most of the time we think of that being a change to bad things. Not necessarily. There are those serendipitous, God-given, grace-filled moments that come that we didn't know about nor expect, and all of a sudden we are overwhelmed. It is magnificent to think about those uncertainties.

If on the other hand there are the uncertainties that come that are not particularly wanted or welcomed, we

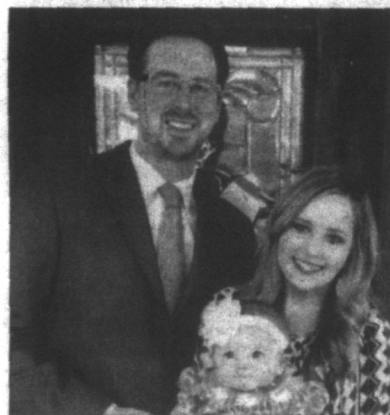
must be ready for that. Maybe it's a health issue that's right there before you about which, 24 hours earlier, you never gave a thought. Maybe it's the loss of a job, a broken relationship, a word spoken that doesn't fit. Things happen, troubles come, crises meet us more than we want to see them, and we must have a sense of awareness and be prepared. How do you get ready for the uncertainties of life? Well, you begin and end and walk every step with an understanding that God cares for you. Whatever else is going on, God cares for you and whatever it is that may come into your life as an uncertain, shocking experience, God knew about it before His sun rose that morning. Trust Him. Lean on Him. Look to Him. He will not only give you a pathway through, He will walk with you every step of the way.

A final thought for your new year, day by day, is the currencies that you have to spend as you travel. God has not just given us time. The currency that is available to us to use and spend for ourselves is especially for and on others. As you travel in however many days God gives you this coming year, be sure to expend some of the love that God has put in your heart to touch someone else's life. Say the kind word. Do the good thing. Let Jesus' light shine through you so the brilliance of it will look like Him and it will be love. Do your best not to hoard any of the currency that He's given you for one day, for you may get in a habit of not doing it then or not letting God use you the next day or next. You get the picture. It's almost as though God has put in your bank account love, joy, peace, longsuffering, concern, gentleness, and all of the things that Jesus delivers to His people. He wants you to use today.

This may not be your last day, but it can be one of your best days. In the new year, head into the midst of all that God has in store for you. Let Him be praised, and you will be blessed.

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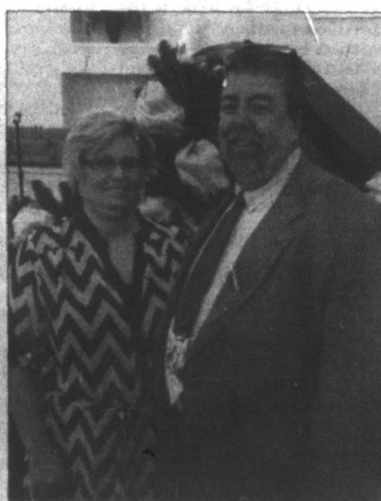
## Staff Changes



**FIRST CHURCH, COLLINS**, has called Joseph Bird as pastor. Bird comes from Midway Church where he served as minister to students. He is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. He is shown with his wife Jennie and his daughter, Addison Grace.



**WEST RIPLEY CHURCH, RIPLEY**, has called Randy Isbell as pastor. He comes with his wife, Juanita.



**TUSCUMBIA CHURCH, BOONEVILLE**, has called Kenneth Leslie as music minister. He comes with his wife, Patti.

## College News

► William Carey University has again been recognized by two national military publications for providing outstanding service in military and veteran education. Military Advanced Education & Transition recognized Carey as a "Top School" for the second consecutive year in its 2016 Guide to Colleges and Universities. The guide seeks to arm students with information about institutions that go out of the way to give back to those in uniform by presenting results of a questionnaire of the military-supportive policies enacted at more than 600 institutions, including private, public, for-profit, not-for-profit, four-year and two-year colleges.





**HIKE ANNOUNCED** — The Federal Open Markets Committee, a part of the Federal Reserve, meets in April 2014 in the Eccles Building in Washington D.C. The committee recently recommended a rate hike in the Federal Funds rate, which will influence interest rates in many sectors of the country's economy. (Wikimedia Commons photo courtesy of Philadelphia Fed)

## GuideStone: Fed hike will have minimal effect

**DALLAS (BP and local reports)** — The Federal Reserve's Dec. 16 decision to raise interest rates for the first time in years should mean little for long-term investors such as those planning for retirement, according to analysts for GuideStone Financial Resources, the financial services arm of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Federal Open Market Committee, which operates within the Federal Reserve, announced a quarter-percent increase in the target Fed Funds rate, with the potential for incremental increases in the future. The GuideStone analysts did note that any increases could have an impact on individuals with variable interest rate debt, as well as short-term and institutional investors.

Federal Reserve governors were unanimous in their decision to increase the Fed Funds rate by .25%, bringing it to a range between 0.25% and 0.5%. The Fed, citing improvements in the economy since 2008, indicated it will make future rate increases gradually. Prior to the announcement, the rate had sat in a range between zero percent and 0.25% since 2008 and had not been raised since 2006.

David S. Spika, global investment strategist at GuideStone Capital Management,

"The economy has been in expansion since mid-2009 and no longer requires emergency monetary policy to support it. We believe that the onset of a gradual and cautious rate hike cycle is good news for investors ..."

**David S. Spika**  
global investment  
strategist at  
GuideStone Capital  
Management

LLC, said the question at this point is how rapidly rates will rise.

"The Fed's preferred measure of inflation remains below the desired level of two percent, so the pace of hikes will be subject to an increase in this measure," Spika said. "We believe this is good news for investors in that it removes the likelihood of rapid and aggressive rate hikes that could derail the current economic expansion and create additional volatility for the financial markets."

While analysts will comb through the Federal Reserve's

comments, along with the news conference offered by Fed Chair Janet Yellen on Dec. 16, long-term investors should continue to focus on their objectives and not on headlines that may trigger short-term market fluctuations, the GuideStone analysts said.

O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources, said, "Retirement investors should consider their time horizon and their investment objectives. There are many experts out there with opinions on steps for institutional and short-term investors. As we remind our participants anytime there is significant news, the performance of your retirement account moving forward will be determined based on results of the financial markets in the future, not the past."

Spika noted rising interest rates are normal at this point during an economic cycle. "The economy has been in expansion since mid-2009 and no longer requires emergency monetary policy to support it. We believe that the onset of a gradual and cautious rate hike cycle is good news for investors and do not expect the Fed Funds rate to reach more than two percent to three percent in this cycle, a level that could take up to three years to attain."

## Louisiana College probation lifted, president declares

**PINEVILLE, La. (BP)** — The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges has removed Louisiana College from probation.

The Association placed the Louisiana Baptist Convention-affiliated college on probation in June 2014, citing issues related to trustee governance, institutional integrity, personnel policies, and audit findings that pertain to some financial control matters and student financial aid.

Rick Brewer, president of Louisiana College, noted in announcing on Dec. 8 the end of probation, "Due to the hard work of former interim president Dr. Argile Smith and his senior administrative team, SACSCOC removed every citation but one."

Throughout the 18-month period since June 2014, Louisiana College maintained its accreditation but remained on probation most recently because the Association board of trustees determined that the college had failed to demonstrate compliance with the organization's Comprehensive Standard 3.2.4 (External influence) of the Principles of Accreditation.

The cited standard, which the college now meets, requires an accredited institution to ensure that its governing board is free from undue external influence from political, religious, or other external bodies and protects the institution from such influence.

Brewer, who became Louisiana College's ninth president in April after his trustee election in March, voiced gratitude to his administrative team "for their diligence in closely examining this remaining matter and for helping to establish safeguards to ensure compliance with SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.2.4."

Brewer said he also is grateful "for our board of trustees who, in their September meeting, adopted a new bylaw that details how to respond to, and report, undue external influence." Brewer said he intends for Louisiana College "always to be found in compliance with every accreditation standard."

In the Dec. 8 news conference at the college, Brewer said, "Moving forward, LC remains steadfast in being mission-driven and vision-focused as we build on the solid foundation of a Christ-centered comprehensive liberal arts education, with a vision for preparing graduates and transforming lives."

"Embedded in the fiber and fabric of the college is our commitment to a broad-based strategic plan for academic enhancement, faith integration and student learning. The framework for all this is our passion for being relational, relevant and rigorous."

LC trustee chairman Randy Harper, pastor of Bellaire Church in Bossier City, La., in a statement sent to the college, stated, "This is fantastic news, and it's a great day for Louisiana College."

Harper, in reference to Brewer's leadership, said it is "confirmation that we found God's man for the tasks at hand and ahead for LC. The probationary sanction has been weighing on the college, but today, God showed us great favor. Now we can focus on even more things for the college's future. Our best days are still ahead of us."

David Hankins, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, said in a statement to Baptist Press, "Dr. Brewer and his team have done a wonderful job addressing the SACS concerns. We are grateful for the decision and excited about the future of Louisiana College."



**WELCOME NEWS** — Louisiana College president Rick Brewer's Dec. 8 announcement on probation cessation at the Louisiana Baptist Convention-affiliated school became the lead story that evening on local television, including station K02QB Channel 2 in Alexandria. (BP photo)

# UM physics prof learns lessons about missions

**OAXACA, Mexico (BP)** — The Quinn family of Oxford agreed last Christmas not to give each other any large presents so they could send their father Breese on a mission trip to Mexico. On Christmas morning when Breese saw his two children smiling at him as they stood beside a big wrapped present, he thought they had reneged on their pact.

When he opened the big box, inside was a diorama that featured the mountainous region of southern Mexico where Breese was going. The gift was titled, Oaxaca Missions 2015. Breese's son Aidan had even added trees from his train set and displayed figures at the foot of the mountain reading the Bible.

On one side of the box, Aidan and sibling Erin had written Romans 10:15: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

They included a family photo and one of Breese in Peru, his first mission trip in 2011 to visit International Mission Board missionaries Jeff and Liesa Holeman, whose home church is also the Quinns' — First Church in Oxford.

This past February, Breese was a part of a mission team from the church that worked for a week alongside the Holemans, who had relocated to Mexico.

The greatest part of the gift to Breese was the prayers from his children lining a side of the box. "It's that part of the gift that really brought me to tears, that there weren't just prayers for me but also prayers for the people of Oaxaca."

"It was the highlight of Christmas for me, representing the support my family was giving to send me out on their behalf," Breese said.

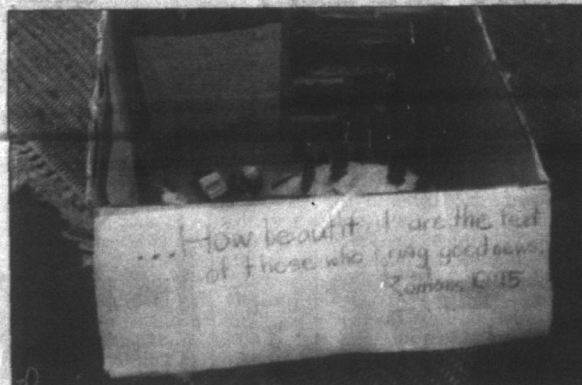
When a teacher's strike in Oaxaca threatened plans the Holemans had developed for Breese and fellow church member Buster Hale to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to a group of teachers, they all wondered whether that part of the trip would need to be canceled.

They began thinking that Breese and Buster would end up helping in clinics that a group of medical professionals from the Oxford congregation would be conducting in the area that same week, but when Liesa Holeman heard that a family wanted one-on-one instruction in English, the ESL aspect of the trip remained though different than originally planned.

Liesa, Buster, and Breese taught ESL classes that week to a small group gathered at Iglesia Cristiana Biblica Evangelica Alamos. Liesa and Buster taught a handful of youth in the sanctu-



**TEACHING, LEARNING** — Breese Quinn (center), a member of First Church, Oxford, and associate professor of physics at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, teaches English to Carlos Vasquez (right), pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Biblica Evangelica Alamos in Oaxaca, Mexico, and his wife Sara. The pastor hopes to use English as a Second Language classes as an outreach ministry to their community. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)



**OFF TO MEXICO** — The Quinn family scaled back Christmas presents last year to send dad Breese on a mission trip to Mexico. When Breese opened his gift, inside was a diorama that featured the mountainous region of southern Mexico. Breese's son Aidan had added trees from his train set and displayed figures at the foot of the mountain reading the Bible. (BP photo courtesy of IMB screen capture)

ary, while Breese practiced English with Alamos' pastor Carlos Vasquez and his wife Sara around their parsonage's kitchen table.

Pastor Vasquez dreams of offering English classes at the church as a way to reach out to his community. His wife, a teacher, is practicing for her certification exam which will offer greater job stability.

"Spending time with Sara and Carlos has been really gratifying, to support these folks in some little way, to help them to better minister to their community," Breese said.

An associate professor of physics at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Breese is accustomed to plotting trajectories but he said the change of plans on this trip taught him to "quit rely-

ing on [my] own plans and to follow God's lead."

Prior to the trip, the Oxford congregation had been studying the Experiencing God book. "This experience has been so closely tied to this study," Breese said. "I'm no longer just trying to figure out what to do for God. I'm available for what God wants to do through me."

"It's so easy to see the needs and how God is working... when we're taken out of our element. I want to recognize what the needs are in my community, when the obstacles to that are just the routine of daily life."

"I want to see past the routine and identify needs and what God is doing about those needs and how I can join Him there, like here in Oaxaca."

## Just for the Record



Sara Morton, ministry associate, **PONTOTOC ASSOCIATION**, is retiring at the end of this year. She is shown with George Steward and Robert Armstrong.

### Correction:

► In the Dec. 17 issue of The Baptist Record, a photograph of Johnny Halderman being ordained misidentified the church. Halderman was ordained as a minister Nov. 29 at **Pleasant Grove Church, Gore Springs**. Halderman was shown with his wife, Carol, and is interim pastor of Sherman Church, Calhoun County. The Record regrets the error.

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## Just for the Record



The children of **JONES CHAPEL CHURCH, NETTLETON**, delivered 60 stuffed animals to residents at River Place Nursing Center in Amory, and 20 to Briar Ridge North Group Home in Nettleton.



**CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, used a Christmas card center for distribution of cards to church members. This has been an annual event for over 15 years.



**PLEASANT RIDGE CHURCH, WOODLAND**, presented a Lord's Supper children's play with Carolyn Irwin, Maddy McGee, Maddyson Fant, and Courtney Fant.



The children's choir of **PLEASANT HILL CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, performed *Rockin' Royal Christmas*. Floyd Higginbotham, pastor.



The children's choir of **NEWHEBRON CHURCH, NEWHEBRON**, presented *A Children's Christmas Worship Musical* Dec. 12. Shown are the participants with their directors, Tammy Thurman and Wanda Grenn.



The WMU of **NESHOBA COUNTY ASSOCIATION** conducted a mission project called Christmas Cookies for a Cause. They baked cookies and delivered them to county officers and fire departments. Shown are Trinity McClain, Stephanie Winstead, April Kaufman, Liberty Kaufman, and Carolyn Winstead.



**WILLAMSVILLE CHURCH, KOSCIUSKO**, recently ordained West Frazure as deacon. Shown are pastor Junior Davis, Margaret Davis, Frazure and his wife, Dawn.



The youth choir of **TUSCUMBIA CHURCH, CORINTH**, presented the Christmas program, *Love*, Dec. 20, under the direction of Sandy Donahue and Vickie Jones.



The **FIRST CHURCH, MORTON**, children's choir presented Christmas is Jesus Dec. 13.



The adult choir of **BLUFF SPRINGS CHURCH, MAGNOLIA**, presented the cantata, *Breath of Heaven*, Dec. 13.

# Report: Aborted babies 'steam-cooked' at disposal

**WASHINGTON (BP and local reports)** — Abortion provider Planned Parenthood's public persona now includes reports that the remains of babies aborted at some of its centers are dumped in landfills after being steamed to destroy bacteria.

An investigation of three Planned Parenthood affiliates in Ohio showed that all of them send the remains of aborted children to third-party companies that dispose of them at landfill sites, state Attorney General Mike DeWine announced Dec. 11.

In a separate report, the web site Pro-Life.com has alleged

that the babies' bodies are "steam-cooked" by the third-party companies in autoclaves, which are machines normally used to sterilize medical instruments at high temperatures and pressures. The procedure is apparently believed to kill any pathogens that may be on the babies' bodies.

The fetal remains apparently are mixed at the landfills with "common residential and commercial trash," DeWine said in a letter to the director of the state's Department of Health. He noted such

practices are against state laws regulating the disposal of human remains.

A move in the U.S. Congress to slash taxpayer funds given annually to Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc. (PPFA) followed the release of undercover videos in the last six months that revealed the country's leading abortion provider trades in baby body parts. PPFA performs more than 300,000 abortions a year, receives more than \$500 million from the government an-

nually, and continues to be plagued by scandal.

The Ohio attorney general's office investigated Planned Parenthood clinics in Cincinnati, Columbus, and the Cleveland suburb of Bedford Heights to determine if they were selling baby parts in violation of state law. His staff found no evidence the clinics were selling fetal tissue, but it uncovered proof of a disposal practice that violates a state rule mandating a "fetus shall be disposed of in a humane manner," said DeWine, a Republican and former U.S. Senator from Ohio.

Planned Parenthood officials in Ohio rejected the

report from DeWine's office, describing the allegations as "inflammatory and false." The Ohio affiliates filed a federal lawsuit Dec. 13, contending they handle fetal remains the way other abortion providers do and utilize companies that dispose of them "respectfully and safely."

"Politicians in Ohio will stop at nothing to ban abortion in all cases in our state," said Stephanie Kight, president of Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio, in a written statement. She called the report a "plainly political attempt to restrict women's access to safe and legal abortion."

## Louisiana church fighting parish over noise complaints

**METAIRIE, La. (BP)** — Louisiana Baptist congregation Vintage Church in suburban New Orleans has filed a lawsuit against the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office and Jefferson Parish in a dispute over sound levels during Sunday worship services in a tent serving as the congregation's temporary meeting area.

The tent, erected in August, is intended to be a short-term arrangement while the Metairie church expands attendance capacity in its permanent building — a project estimated for completion in nine or 10 months.

The petition filed jointly by local attorney Roy Bowes and the Liberty Institute, a nonprofit law firm in Plano, Texas, which focuses on religious liberty issues, accuses Sheriff Newell Normand and his officers of intimidation tactics in attempting to essentially shut down Vintage Church's weekly worship services because of noise complaints by a single individual.

The suit also describes the applicable noise level ordinances as flawed.

On the other side, at least one neighbor in the community claims the church is not being considerate by allowing musicians to warm up as early as 7 a.m. on Sundays, and she claims she is not alone in opposing the noise levels coming from the tent.

"The 911 calls will show that it's not just me," said Lisa Caracci, who lives next door, according to a Dec. 11 report in the New Orleans Advocate. "We have this really quiet little street here, and we had never had an issue with this church until the tent came."

Vintage Church, a growing church plant started in 2008, merged with the former Highland Church, original owners of the property on Rayne Street, in 2010. Jefferson Parish Councilwoman Cynthia Lee-Sheng, whose district includes the Vintage



**ROB WILTON**

Church campus, said in a NOLA.com/Times-Picayune report that several people had complained about the noise. "It's not about the worship," she said. "It's about being a good neighbor."

Vintage Church Pastor Rob Wilton said the church has been trying to do just that, hiring technicians to ensure sound levels would not exceed the 60-decibel limit being imposed on the church and by moving to acoustic guitars with no amplification.

Still, the phone complaints continued and the constant visits from the sheriff's office have had a negative effect on the congregation, Wilton said. "It's a difficult thing in church work just to get a congregation to be faithful week to week on a normal regular Sunday with normal circumstances," Wilton told the Baptist Message, news journal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

"If you can imagine, we are meeting for worship in a tent, on a property where construction is happening, and top that off with every single week police coming out to visit, engaging my church staff, and even on certain weekends giving us criminal summons. That's just not a friendly

thing for a congregation to see and that has certainly not helped us in keeping people around."

Wilton said even faithful volunteers have informed him it's very difficult to attend, "out of fears." The pastor said he was vexed by the complaints, given the welcome the church has received from the community overall.

"For the most part, the majority of the neighborhood around us loves Vintage Church," Wilton said. "They love us being here." He said neighbors are excited about the growth of the church and the expansion of the facilities.

The protracted conflict began Aug. 9, the second Sunday when services were held in the tent. Since then:

■ The Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office sent officers to the church to investigate a complaint but did not issue a citation, according to the church's lawsuit. Complaints continued through the month, but there were no legal ramifications, only a warning to keep sound levels below 60 decibels before 8:50 a.m.

■ The church had been operating in the tent during August under a special events permit, which was renewed in September but with the caveat of no drums or electric guitars. The church switched to acoustic guitars for services, according to the legal filing.

■ Later in the month, Jefferson Parish required Vintage Church to reduce its tent footprint because of parking requirements, and the congregation complied.

■ During the first week in October, a parish official warned the church to cease playing music or risk being shut down.

■ Sheriff's deputies continued to show up during services in October and November, and twice issued a summons to Executive Pastor Matthew Brichetto and actually fingerprinted him both times in the greeting area.

## CLASSIFIEDS

**PULPIT SUPPLY AVAILABLE:** Retired Southern Baptist Navy chaplain available for Sunday pulpit supply on short notice (pastor illness, vacation, rest, etc.). 100 mile radius of Hattiesburg. Member of Hardy Street Baptist Church. Graduate of New Orleans Baptist and Fuller Theological Seminaries. References available. Compensation unimportant. Contact Dr. Benny J. Hornsby at 601-408-4608 or villefranchese90@yahoo.com

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**FBC MENDENHALL IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC.** Please send resume to PO Box 366 Mendenhall, MS 39114 or email to [swarren@fbc-mendenhall.org](mailto:swarren@fbc-mendenhall.org)

**WE ARE SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR.** Please send resumes to [enonbaptistchurch@outlook.com](mailto:enonbaptistchurch@outlook.com) or mail them to Enon Baptist Church, 2604 Carrollton Rd Grenada, MS 38901 attn: Laura Cook.

**NEEDED: SENIOR PASTOR, RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH, Clarkdale, MS.** Email resumes to [riverside135@yahoo.com](mailto:riverside135@yahoo.com)

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GNCS NW CSNBV CSUDLB JSUES CSNH

SOBC BVVD, ODX NW CSNBV CSUDLB UD

CSV JSUES U JURR OYYVOA HDCN CSVV.

OECB CJVDCM-BUK: BUKCVVD

Clue: Y = P

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark 14:64

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

# Court sides with lawsuit by fired Atlanta fire chief

DULUTH, Ga. (BP and local reports) - The lawsuit filed by former Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran after he was fired for exercising his religious freedom will proceed after a Dec. 16 federal court ruling in his favor.

The Atlanta Division of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia dismissed some of Cochran's claims in the lawsuit but allowed the suit to go forward on Cochran's primary claims of "retaliation, discrimination based on his viewpoint, and the violation of his constitutionally protected freedom of religion, association, and due process (firing without following proper procedure)," according to Cochran's attorneys, Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a faith-based, non-profit organization based in Scottsdale, Az., that specializes in religious freedom cases.

Cochran, a deacon at 19,000-member Elizabeth Church affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention, was terminated on Jan. 6 due to his personal statements on the Bible and the homosexual lifestyle. He is also the former head of the federal U.S. Fire Administration and former fire chief in Shreveport, La.

In its lawsuit, ADF alleges that the city terminated Cochran "in retaliation for exercising his First Amendment right to free speech." The lawsuit states, "a public employer may not terminate a public employee in retaliation for speech protected by the First Amendment."

ADF Senior Counsel Kevin Thieriot, in commenting on the ruling, said this week, "A religious or ideological test cannot

be used to fire a public servant, but the city did exactly that, as the evidence and facts of this case clearly demonstrate.

"We look forward to proceeding with this case because of the injustice against Chief Cochran,

one of the most accomplished fire chiefs in the nation, but also because the city's actions place every city employee in jeopardy who may hold to a belief that city officials don't like."

ADF Senior Counsel David Cortman added, "Tolerance must ap-

ply to people of different viewpoints, not just those who agree with the beliefs the government prefers. Americans don't surrender their constitutionally protected freedoms when they become public servants."

On Dec. 3, a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights wrote to Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed sharply criticizing his firing of Cochran. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that the letter from Commissioner Peter Kirsanow stated, in part, "(I)t is apparent that the city has chosen slender reeds with which to support its dismissal of Chief Cochran. It is remarkable to claim, as the City does, that religious beliefs are not a matter of public concern and therefore are unprotected by the First Amendment."

The newspaper reported that the letter was a non-binding opinion of the commissioner alone.

Kirsanow is an attorney with the Labor and Employment Group of the Benesch law firm in Cleveland, Oh. He is also a former member of the National Labor Relations Board.

The Georgia Baptist Convention has also come out in strong support of Cochran, launching an online petition in January protesting Reed's action. The petition, bearing signatures from more than 11,000 individuals nationwide and which called for Cochran to be reinstated, was delivered to the mayor's office on Jan. 13.

J. Gerald Harris, editor of the Georgia Baptist Convention's Christian Index news journal and a former Mississippi pastor, in a special Jan. 9 editorial three days after the termination called for the mayor to "repent or resign."

At this year's annual meeting of the state convention in November, Cochran thanked messengers for their support and gave an update on the past year since losing his job and gaining national media attention. He spoke on Nov. 10, just two weeks shy of the year anniversary of his initial 30-day suspension which led to his termination. During the evening session, he spoke of the providence of God in meeting his family's needs.

Cochran, reported that he has been called to preach, having delivered his first sermon on July 11, and has since gained employment as chief operating officer at his church, "providing a predictable income" for the first time in 12 months. He then thanked Christian supporters like the state convention, who stood by him during the most difficult time in his life.

"There are Christians nationwide who have watched how you responded to my situation and have risen to support others in similar situations who have faced trying times for their faith," Cochran said.

Messengers gave the soft-spoken Cochran a standing ovation.



COCHRAN

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3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

# THE VILLAGE VIEW



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## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DECEMBER 1-13, 2015

### MEMORIALS

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Faithful Workers SSC, Salem BC  
Mrs. Ella Mae Breland  
Mr. Don E. Porter  
Mrs. Irene Brown  
Buddy Russell's SSC,  
Arlington BC  
Twila Brown  
Mr. & Mrs. David T.  
Huddleston  
Charles & Mavis Burch  
Ms. Kaye S. Williamson  
Mavis Carr Burch  
Ms. Mary Catherine Gentry  
Mr. & Mrs. David W. Carter  
Annie Kate Burrell  
Mr. & Mrs. James H. Mitchell  
Mr. Charles W. Holmes  
Mrs. Tollie Stanford  
Billy Chapman  
Ms. Katherine Channell  
Linda Cobb  
Mrs. Gwen S. Daves  
Loree Alexander Cody  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Alexander  
Betty Jean Conger  
Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Pinnix  
Frank Curlee  
Mr. & Mrs. James H. Chase  
Mrs. Floyd Robbins  
Edward Cutts  
Bennie & Cindy Nutt  
Marion and Juanita Davis  
Mrs. Patsy D. Reeves  
Mr. & Mrs. V. B. Davis  
Mrs. Mary D. Horton  
Mrs. Billie J. Deer  
Mr. Tony Rogers  
Paula K. Dossett  
Mr. Douglas Lane Dossett  
Kendall Eaton  
Vera Windham  
Elizabeth Eckert

Mrs. Hershel G. Turner  
Mrs. Jesse Emery  
Mr. & Mrs. Buford Berry  
Frances Evans  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Alexander  
Earl Everett  
Dr. & Mrs. F. David Rives  
Robert Joel "Bobby" Fairley  
Mrs. Christine F. McRee  
Mrs. Christine F. McRee  
Betty Fields  
Ms. Grace M. Ackle  
Mrs. George (Donna) Flynt  
Bill & Charlene Bullock  
Ms. Shirley Holloway  
Ms. Fay S. Ray  
Mr. Billy Ford  
Mr. & Mrs. Terry E. Champion  
Shellie Goode  
Mrs. Carol J. Rather  
June Harris  
Mr. & Mrs. Scooter Henderson  
Mrs. Libba Curry  
Carl Carr & Susan Haskins  
Mrs. Tena Haskins  
Mrs. Marcell Hemphill  
Mrs. Willie Frances Jones  
Thomas & Sylvia Humphreys  
Elaine Herring  
Mr. W. B. Herring  
Hazel Hill  
Mrs. Carol J. Rather  
Minnie John Hill  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Alexander  
Curtis Hillman  
Mr. & Mrs. Danny Withers  
Mary Holcombe  
Sr Adult SSC, Siloam BC  
Kenneth Hughes  
Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Pinnix  
Carrie Hurley  
Hon. & Mrs. Jess H. Dickinson  
Phil Irwin  
Ms. Linda Bowers Vance  
Amy Jones  
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur D. Burnett  
John R. Landress

Mr. & Mrs. Larry Berry  
Carl Latham  
Mr. & Mrs. Bill West  
Joshua Bryan Lazarus  
Mr. & Mrs. Bobby T. Hancock  
Johnny Liles  
Mr. & Mrs. Danny Withers  
Ronny Mahon  
Ms. Pam Russell  
George & Ruth Massingale  
Ms. Twila Rawson  
Johanna Massingale  
Ms. Twila Rawson  
Delmas McAlpin  
Ms. Carol C. Smith  
Bobbie Jean McDaniel  
Ladies Adult IV SSC, McCool BC  
Mrs. Ann Eaves McLelland  
Ellison Ridge BC  
Raymond McRee  
Mrs. Christine F. McRee  
Prentiss McReynolds  
Mr. & Mrs. John T. Morrow  
William R. Mills  
Ms. Marion H. Mills  
J. T. Morrison  
Mr. & Mrs. Judd A. Morrison  
J. V. & Mary K. Parker  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael W. Parker  
Alan Patterson  
Ms. Twila Rawson  
Allen Patterson  
Tom & Patricia Anderson  
Charles Patterson  
Mr. & Mrs. James T. Garrett  
Donald Patterson  
Ms. Twila Rawson  
Dorothy Penn  
James & Barbara Toney  
Judge Joe Pigott  
Mr. & Mrs. Krandall Howell  
Mrs. Tena Haskins  
Jimmy Purvis  
Mrs. L. D. Warren  
John Rankin  
FBC McComb, Adult 7 SS Dept  
David Ratliff  
Mr. Tony Rogers  
Mr. John David Ray  
Mr. & Mrs. Ray Rounsaville  
J. C. Rhymes  
Jack Davis Luncheon Group  
Mr. & Mrs. Jack T. Yates &  
Family  
Ms. Joyce Rials  
Ray Roberts  
Ms. Carol C. Smith  
Vernon Robertson  
Ms. Carol C. Smith  
Aubrey Rozzell  
Ms. Judy H. Lacy  
Minnie Rushing  
Mrs. Carol J. Rather  
Ray Rutledge  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Alexander  
Dr. Tony Scarborough  
Dr. & Mrs. Jay L. Hubbard  
Jackie Overbey Sims  
Mr. & Mrs. David Waters  
The Waters Family &  
Employees of Waters  
Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. James  
Mr. Steve W. Murray  
Sonny & Joy Peery  
Owen & Janice Jones  
Jeremy, Jana, Will &  
Elisabeth Grace Flint  
Jane Ellen Slagle  
Mr. & Mrs. Krandall Howell  
Mr. John Charles Smith  
Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Pinnix  
Tyler Steele  
Eddiction BC  
Ms. Terri Steen  
Mr. & Mrs. Morgan Gullledge  
Mr. Bob R. Taylor  
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Alan Causey  
Glenn & Kelly Hepner  
Ralph Taylor  
Mrs. D. E. Landrum  
Mrs. Jeanette Thompson  
Mr. & Mrs. Tom P. Miller  
Ms. Rebecca M. Grantham



▲ Frances and Walter Hayman, India Nunnery Campus Houseparents, have worked throughout this year to build and paint this beautiful nativity that is displayed on the campus.

◀ Thank you to our sweet friend in Leakesville, MS who made these adorable ornaments for several of our residents.

▼ Thank you to the Nissan North America employees at the Canton, MS plant for their kindness and generosity once again this Christmas. These toys will be a blessing to the children and families served through The Baptist Children's Village.



## YEAR END GIFTS

Year end gifts to The Baptist Children's Village must be in our finance office by December 31st. All mail should be sent to The Baptist Children's Village, PO Box 27, Clinton, Mississippi 39060-0027. In addition, we offer an online giving option at [www.baptistchildrensvillage.com](http://www.baptistchildrensvillage.com) for your convenience. Call the office at 601-952-2422 or email Celeste Cade at [ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com](mailto:ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com) if you have any questions.

Annie Pearl Triplett  
Ms. Kaye Miles  
Wayne Walley Truitt  
Mr. & Mrs. Gwendell Pearson  
Mr. & Mrs. Pete Robbins  
Mr. & Mrs. Travis Berry  
Mr. & Mrs. Lee Harbison  
Robert Vinson  
Ms. Carol C. Smith  
Karen Waldrop  
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Steele

Bobby G. Walters  
Mrs. Peggy P. Coleman  
Peggy Watson,  
FBC Louisville  
FBC Louisville, Faith & Hope  
SSC  
Randall Webb  
Mr. & Mrs. John R. Ballard  
Mr. Will Weilenman  
Mr. & Mrs. Tom W. Potter  
Joseph Wheeler

Adult Men & Ladies TEL SSC,  
Springfield BC  
Mr. & Mrs. Carl R. Woolery  
Virginia Whittington  
Eddiction BC  
Bobbie Jane Whittle  
Concord Baptist Church  
Bill and Edith Wilkinson  
Ken, Jane & Johnnie Wilkinson  
Lavoy Wilkinson  
Ken, Jane & Johnnie Wilkinson



## The King's Expectations • Matthew 5:1-16

Matthew 5 through 7 is known as The Sermon on the Mount. The name comes from the first verse of chapter 5: "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him." Matthew 5:1 (KJV). To our American ears it may seem a little bit strange that Jesus sat down to preach the Sermon on the Mount. But in the culture of first century Palestine this was the norm.

The last phrase of the verse we just looked at said, "when he was set, his disciples came to him."

The disciples seeing Him sit down to talk, understood that to mean He had something very important to say. Matthew records the detail of His sitting down to show us that this was very important teaching to follow. This might not be quite so foreign to us if we remember colleges, universities, and seminaries have endowed chairs for their most prominent professors to teach their most important subjects.

The Sermon on the Mount was the orientation workshop for the new disciples. It covers in an organized fashion some of the most important subjects that Jesus felt these novice disciples would need to prepare them for their ministries.

Jesus begins this rather extensive lesson with The Beatitudes, 8 of them. They are teachings such as "Blessed are the meek." Matthew 5:5a (KJV). The English scholar William Barclay tells us in his Daily Study Bible that we must first understand the word blessed used in the King James. Jesus first spoke The Beatitudes in Aramaic, which was a kind of Hebrew spoken by His disciples and the Jews of His day. Then, the Holy Spirit preserved these in Greek but we normally receive and read them in English. All that to say, we need to try a little harder to understand Jesus' use of the word "Blessed."

I found an explanation in Barclay's commentary that was very helpful. The Aramaic and Old Testament Hebrew have a common expression which means "O the blessedness of." Barclay sites the beginning of the Book of Psalms where he says a good translation of this expression would be: "O the blessedness of the man that walketh not in the counsel of

the ungodly." This emphasis is on the continual blessing of God for the present and into eternity.

With this explanation Barclay says a good modern English translation of the first Beatitude would be: "O the bliss of the man who has realized his own utter Helplessness, and who has put his whole trust in God, for thus alone he can render to God that perfect obedience which will make him a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven!" His emphases on the state

of Bliss, provided by God's grace, is that it is without limit or end for the follower of the Christ is richly meaningful to me.

### Explore the Bible with Don Hicks



When one lives the life described in The Beatitudes they become the salt of the earth. Salt is both a preservative and seasoning. A person who lives a life that hungers and thirst, after righteousness and are peacemakers would certainly make a good preservative in our nation today. Our society would be well seasoned with the salt of mercy,

love, righteousness, purity, gentleness, and faith. Jesus warns that if we allow our salt to lose its savor our influence will be lost, "but if the salt have lost its savor, where-with shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing," Matthew 5:13 (KJV).

Then Jesus taught, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid," Matthew 5:14 (KJV). It seems to me it would be a natural extension of this quote to say a church on a hill cannot be hid. Does your church seek to show its light in your community?

Jesus told us to intentionally put our witness on a candle stick so it will shine clearly to men. He tells us it would be foolish to light a candle and hid it under a basket. Jesus clearly tells us how to use our light: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works."

But if we don't finish the verse our salt is in danger of only being trampled underfoot because it is worthless. The end of verse is the punch line that must not be missed. "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matthew 5:16 (KJV).

Hicks is associational missions director for Jasper Association in Bay Springs.

## Equipped with God's Gifts • 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

When we speak of someone being gifted, we often think of people who are especially talented in a particular area. Someone may be a strong athlete, a skilled craftsman, or have a lovely singing voice. Others are highly intellectual or artistic. When thinking of being gifted in this way or when comparing oneself to others, it's easy to potentially think of oneself as lacking any particular "gift." But, according to Scripture, the Holy Spirit has gifted each and every Christian with a spiritual gift(s).

The believer does not choose his or her spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are not given so that we can accomplish the things we want to do; rather, they enable us to do that which God desires of us. God gives them in order to equip us for that which He has planned. In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses the topic of spiritual gifts. He says that these gifts "are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills." (1 Corinthians 12:11, ESV) The Holy Spirit chooses which gift each will receive and bestows it upon the believer.

Spiritual gifts are not to be a source of pride, for they are not something that one earns. When writing on this topic to the church in Rome, Paul says that

these gifts have been given to us by God as an act of grace. In fact, the Greek word that is translated as "gift" is "charisma," which Vine's Expository Dictionary defines as "a gift of grace, a gift involving grace." As the body of Christ, the many members by grace have been given different gifts that work together. Rather than feeling that one's gift is better than others' or wishing that one had a different gift, we each should appreciate and humbly seek to use the gift which has been graciously and purposefully given to us by the will of God.

While they are not intended to be for show, spiritual gifts are also not to be hoarded. God intends for us to use them to minister to one another. We are instructed in 1 Peter 4:10, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (NKJV) In 1 Corinthians 12:4, we are told, "To each is given the

manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (ESV) By appropriately using our gifts, we can build up one another and enable the body to work effectively. We have received in order that we may give to and serve others.

Gifts come in all shapes and sizes. While there are many different kinds of gifts, each one has value and is an essential part of the body as a whole.

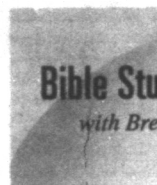
Paul gives examples of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, which include the "utterance of wisdom... the utterance of knowledge... faith... gifts of healing... the working of miracles... prophecy... the ability to distinguish between spirits... various kinds of tongues... interpretation of tongues." (ESV) In another listing of spiritual gifts in Romans 12, Paul includes prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and acts of mercy. Again in Ephesians 4, Paul speaks of spiritual gifts and names the

gifts of apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pastoring and teaching.

There is indeed much variety among the gifts, but the same God gives each one. The ultimate purpose of each, as should be true of any area of life, is bringing glory to God. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever." (1 Peter 4:11, NKJV) Whatever our gift, we are called to put it to use. "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:6-8) When we know which gift we have been given, we are better able to bring glory to God and serve one another. Do you know your spiritual gift? If so, how are you using it for the kingdom?

Wooten is a member of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton.

### Bible Studies for Life with Breanna Wooten



## KROGER

cont. from p. 1

America to that list," he said.

Companies do not make these decisions "because of a dispassionate evaluation of what attracts the best employees and how best to serve them," Sprigg said. "Instead, it

is the result of relentless lobbying on the part of LGBT activists, accompanied by implicit or explicit threats to try to harm a company's reputation if they do not fall into line."

He suggested transgender issues will play an increasing role in American life, involving children, education, and the federal government through issues such

as mixed-gender locker rooms and all-gender bathrooms.

How conservatives respond when dealing with these issues is important, he said. "We must always communicate that we do not seek to harm homosexual or transgender persons, but on the contrary, seek to spare them from the well-documented harms to physical and mental

health that are associated with homosexual and transgender conduct," he said.

According to The Kroger Company web site, it was in 1883 that Barney Kroger, son of a merchant, invested his life savings of \$372 to open a grocery store at 66 Pearl Street in downtown Cincinnati. The 2014 Kroger Fact Book lists over

5,100 supermarkets, convenience stores, fuel stations, fine jewelry stores, distribution centers, and food processing plants now owned by the company. Total company sales in 2014 were \$108.5 billion.

Based on initial reporting by World News Service. Edited for style and clarity.

# Should Christian parents worry about Star Wars?

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — The latest Star Wars movie has awakened a force of Christian-themed commentary touching on subjects from the film's theological errors to its relation to the storyline of the Bible.

According to boxofficemojo.com, Star Wars: The Force Awakens (PG-13) grossed \$248 million in its first three days of wide release in North America and will likely earn more than one billion dollars in domestic box office revenue. That would make it the top grossing movie of all time, The Hollywood Reporter observed.

The film is set 30 years following 1983's Star Wars: Episode VI: Return of the Jedi, and chronicles the protagonists' efforts to defeat a totalitarian-led army seeking to conquer the universe.

Among Southern Baptists, a Missouri pastor has written an analysis of theologically troubling themes in Star Wars; Southern Seminary devoted the cover of one campus publication to the latest film; and a Southern Seminary professor re-released his 2003 book exploring a Christian experience in the first six Star Wars movies prior to The Force Awakens.

In the broader evangelical world, Christianity Today, The Gospel Coalition, R.C. Sproul's Ligonier Ministries, The Heritage Foundation, Crosswalk.com, and The Christian Post among others all have published Star Wars-themed articles.

Phil Boatwright, a Christian movie critic often published in The Baptist Record, told Baptist Press, "It's good Christians want to talk about" Star Wars. The series, he said, has generated discussion since 1977 when the initial movie became the highest grossing film to date.

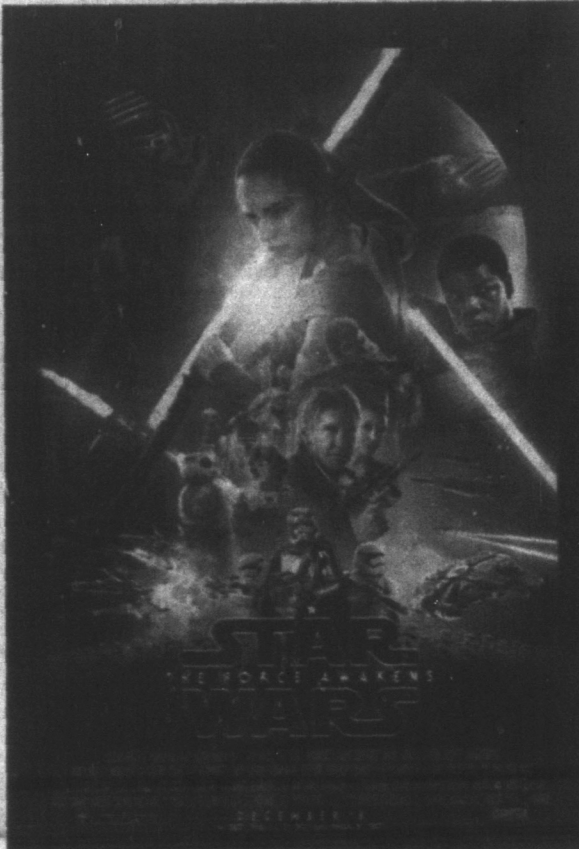
"The people writing about Star Wars today grew up watching it," Boatwright said. "Star Wars changed the way films were made, beginning a trend of special effects becoming more important than story and inanimate objects becoming central characters. It was then, as now, a phenomenon, with brilliant marketing tactics causing moviegoers to want to see it over and over."

In his review of The Force Awakens, Boatwright said New Age and Eastern religious themes for which Star Wars movies have drawn criticism from believers in the past "are pared down a bit." He described the latest installment "a spin on the Western genre, if you will. Or perhaps more precisely, it is a good vs. evil actioner wherein a price is paid for freedom, truth, and the Galaxy way."

Jake Taggart, director of education at Concord Church in Jefferson City, Mo., wrote in an Internet commentary on the church website that Christians should enjoy The Force Awakens but with an awareness of "theological fissures of Star Wars lore that heterodoxically distances it from Christianity." Heterodoxy is defined as being at variance with generally accepted doctrine or practice.

Among the theological points noted by Taggart are that Star Wars appears to equate God with forces in the universe, a religious system known as pantheism, and to suggest salvation comes through losing personal identity after death and becoming "one with the Force."

Despite these themes, "Christ-followers need not fear attending the latest Star Wars movie," Taggart wrote. He urged parents to discuss with their children the



differences between Star Wars and Christianity.

"Star Wars is a great drama, but its theology is not from a galaxy far, far away, but more likely from an earthen region in the far, far East," Taggart wrote. "Just remember

that it is only the Gospel of Jesus Christ that can save humanity."

At Southern Seminary, the cover of the December-January issue of the campus publication Towers pictures a starry sky and features the headline: Star Wars: The

Wonder Awakens. A four-page spread discusses "the religious world of the Star Wars saga."

A message from editor Craig Sanders notes, "The Force Awakens... is expected to be the biggest movie of all time. If you don't see this movie, most of your friends and family will, so I hope this issue helps you engage in the task of interpreting movies from a Christian worldview."

Southern Seminary professor Timothy Paul Jones' book on Star Wars, Finding God in a Galaxy Far, Far Away, was re-released by Waterbrook Multnomah in conjunction with the opening of The Force Awakens.

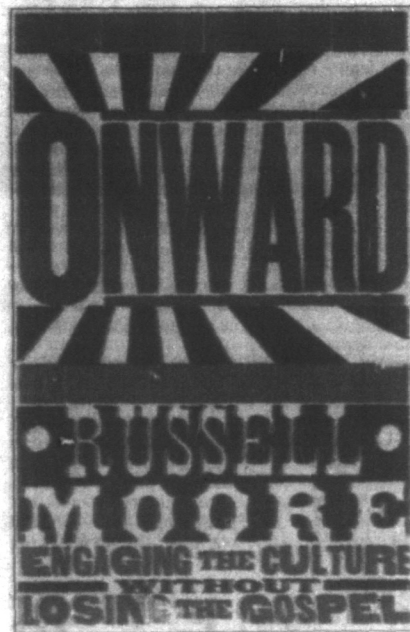
Jones told BP that Star Wars films, like nearly all movies worth watching, echo the Bible's storyline by depicting a good state of existence that is lost and needs to be restored.

"In the best movies, the heroes endure suffering and sacrifice to triumph over evil and bring about a new and better possibility," said Jones, a professor of family ministry, in written comments. "This basic storyline characterizes the best movies because this storyline was God's storyline long before it was ours."

"God created a good world; this world was distorted through the fall of Adam and Eve; God purchased redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and this glorious resurrection inaugurated a new creation that God will bring to fruition and fulfillment at the end of time."

According to Boatwright's review, The Force Awakens contains one mild expletive along with violence that is cartoonish with no blood, though there is a great deal of killing. The film contains no sex or nudity.

## Moore work is Christianity Today Book of the Year



**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — Mississippi native Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, has won Christianity Today's Book of the Year Award for On-

The nation's leading evangelical magazine announced Dec. 16 that its editorial team had selected Moore's book as the winner of its first-ever Beautiful Orthodoxy award as 2015's book release that best exemplifies the magazine's "pursuit of truthfulness and loveliness." Christianity Today also named the Biloxian's book as the winner in the politics and public life category.

B&H Publishing Group, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, released Onward in August. Jennifer Lyell, B&H Trade Book publisher, said the publishing group is thankful for the book's recognition by Christianity Today and believes it is very much deserved.

"Dr. Moore is uniquely gifted to speak to the issues of our day," Ly-

ell said in a news release. "[His] perspective is grounded by biblical truth, rooted in theological depth, and seasoned by the people he's met through decades of Gospel ministry. This all combines with the pen of [a] writer as gifted as any I have

ever met, to produce messages that have the potential to shape a generation."

In his book, Moore urges evangelicals to engage the culture with hope and boldness. The demise of nominal Christianity in the United States is actually good for the church, he writes. His book encourages evangelicals to embrace the strangeness of Christianity and to recognize

they are a "prophetic minority" that should speak with "convictional kindness." Such kindness, marked by faithfulness to the Gospel with a gracious tone, is actually an "act of warfare," Moore says.

Harold Smith, president of Christianity Today, said in the magazine's online article about the Book of the Year award, "Moore provides a primer on how our commitments to Christ and his kingdom (as opposed to our political, social, and cultural agendas) should shape not only how we live our lives, but also what our lives should say to a watching, listening world.

"Combining the beauty of what he calls the 'true Gospel' with a biblical orthodoxy that will inescapably mark Christians as 'strange,' Moore holds forth on the charged issues defining the 21st century."

In the magazine, Alan Noble, editor in chief of Christ and Pop Culture and an English professor at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, said Moore's response to the power slippage of conservative Christianity and to the skepticism by younger evangelicals about the church's engagement in politics "is not bitter or frantic, but measured and confident. We need this book. I only wish we had had it 20 years ago."

In November, Moore's book received recognition from Publishers Weekly as a top five religion title for the year.

Among other books honored this year by Christianity Today as ones "most likely to shape evangelical life, thought, and culture" were:

■ George Whitfield: America's Spiritual Founding Father, by Thomas Kidd, history professor at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, in the history/biography category.

■ Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion, by social critic Os Guinness; an English author, in the apologetics/evangelism category.